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ABSTRACT

A study was made to determine the reasons that students drop Introduction to Business at Cuyahoga Community College-Metropolitan Campus. Of 422 students who were enrolled in the course during the winter quarter of 1974, 103 withdrew. An attempt was made to reach by telephone all students who had withdrawn from the course. Of the 52 who were reached, 48 stated that they had withdrawn because of personal reasons, and 4 stated that they withdrew due to teacher/student conflict. The students surveyed were, for the most part, unaware of the options open to them. (DB)

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An Investigation of the Causes of Student Drop-out in Introduction to Business 460-108

by

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April, 1974

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I. The Title

An Investigation of the Causes of Student Drop-out in Introduction to Business 460-108.

II. The Statement of the Problem

What causes students to drop Introduction to Business at Cuyahoga Community College - Metropolitan Campus? Are these causes college related or non-college related? Is there a significant difference between college and non-college related causes?

III. The Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between college and non-college causes for student drop-out in Introduction to Business 460-108.

IV. Background and Significance of the Study

School droponts (also known as wastage) are a problem worldwide. At the U.N.E.S.C.O., International Conference on Public Education, it was reported that:

> "About half of the world's primary students have dropped out of school before they have finished the course." [1]

In this country considerable energy has been expended in an effort to determine the rate and causes of wastage. In a study released by the United States Department of Labor, the primary reasons for dropout was marriage or pregnancy (23.9%) while not interested in school was second (21.3%). Economic reasons was the third most frequent reason (18.2%) [2]

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[1] J. M. Newill, "World Drop-out Rate is Appaling" (London: Times Ed. Sup. 2875:17, June 26, 1972).

[2] U. S. Department of Labor, Manpower Report of the President and a Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training; Employment Security Bureau, 1966, p. 98.

President Kennedy, in his 1962 Education Message to Congress, summed up our need to expand and improve education in order to reduce human wastage as follows:

> "Today, more than at any other time in our history, we need to develop our intellectual resources to the fullest. But the facts of the matter are that many thousands of our young people are not educated to their maximum capacity -- and they are not, therefore, making the maximum contribution of which they are capable to themselves, their families, their communities and the Nation. Their talents lie wasted--their lives are frequently pale and blighted--and their contribution to our economy and culture are lamentably below the levels of their potential skills, knowledge, and creative ability. Educational failures breed delinquency, despair, and dependence. They increase the costs of unemployment and public welfare. They cut our potential national economic output by billions. They deny the benefits of our society to large segments of our people. They undermine our capability as a nation to discharge world obligations. All this we cannot afford--better schools we can afford." [3]

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[3] Sidney W. Tiedt, The Role of the Federal Government in Education, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 174.

"There is a darker side to education in America," said President Johnson. The President went on to explain by saying:

> "One student out of every three now in the fifth grade will drop out before finishing high school--if the present rate continues.
>
> Almost a million young people will continue to quit school each year--if our schools fail to stimulate their desire to learn.
>
> Over 100,000 of our brightest high school graduates each year will not go to college--and many others will leave college--if the opportunity for higher education is not expanded.
>
> The cost of this neglect runs high--both for the youth and the Nation:
>
> Unemployment of young people with an eighth grade education or less is four times the national average.
>
> Jobs filled by high school graduates rose by 40 percent in the last 10 years. Jobs for those with less schooling decreased by nearly 10 percent.
>
> We can measure the cost in even starker terms. We now spend about $450 a year per child in our public schools. But we spend $1,800 a year to keep a delinquent youth in a detention home, $2,500 a year for a family on relief, $3,500 a year for a criminal in State prison.
>
> The growing numbers of young people reaching school age demand that we move swiftly even to stand still." [4]

---

[4] Ibid, p. 21.

In the same message, President Johnson provided this challenge to the Congress:

> "I propose that the 89th Congress join me in extending the Commitment still further. I propose that we declare a national goal of
>
> Full Educational Opportunity
>
> Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take.
>
> We want this not only for his sake--but for the Nation's sake."[5]

Truly, "open door" admission at Community Colleges is in keeping with our national goals. Some might suggest that the open door at Community Colleges is a swinging door with students coming and going at sonic speeds. The attrition rate is alarming.

In his doctoral thesis, Greive reported:

> "The diverse student body enrolled in the Community College had an attrition rate somewhat greater than the four-year college. It was established that the attrition rate was nearly 40% in the first year and approximately 70% for the two-year period."

---

[5] Ibid, p. 214.

Greive cited the following as major reasons for Community College droponts:

Employment	22.9%
Other reasons	21.4%
Transfer	20.9%
Military	15.8%

Of further interest was Greive's data on grade-point averages. He was able to document that 51.6% of the dropouts had grade point averages below 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale) but only 1.1% listed academic difficulties as a reason for dropping.[6]

Others who have studied the Community College dropout problem have also concluded that the drop rate was extremely high. Medsker and Tilley, for example, reported that one-third of those enrolled in transfer programs in Community Colleges actually transferred.[7]

At Cuyahoga Community College less than 30% of those who matriculate graduate two years later. Only modest information exists as to the "why."

During the fall term of 1973 the Metro Campus c[illegible]ied 12 sectio[illegible] of Introduction to Business. A review of the drop rate in these sections (table #1) provides certain knowledge that something is amiss. Using original registration (14 day) as input and total official drops at final exam period we can view the extent of the problem.

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[6]Donald E. Greive, A Follow-through Study of 1,642 Full-time Students Who Entered a Comprehensive Community College in the Fall of 1968, an unpublished doctoral thesis.

[7]Medsker, L. and Tillery, D. Breaking the Access Barrier. New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1971.

The rate of drop ranged from a low of 17% to a high of 42% while the average attrition rate was 33%.

Table #1

A summary of enrollments and withdrawals for Introduction to Business (460-108), Fall 1973.

Section	14 Day Reg.	Total Drops	% Drops
2001	50	21	42%
2002	38	16	42%
2003	105	37	35%
2004	33	8	24%
2005	58	24	41%
2006	21	4	19%
2007	34	11	32%
2061*	49	20	41%
2062*	56	20	36%
2063*	42	12	29%
2064*	53	9	17%
2065*	37	9	24%
Total	576	191	33%

* Evening sections

Cuyahoga Community College, Metro, is currently concerned about a shrinkage in F.T.E. Reduced F.T.E. means reduced State funds of about $1,200 per F.T.E. There is the fear that this is the beginning of a prolonged period of a slowdown or reversal in student enrollment.

In addition to economic factors, there is the "human side of education." Every year, more than 38C,000 students fail out of

college. Each young man and woman is looked upon with pity, suspicion, and even anger." [8]

Failure, whether shown as failing grades or as dropouts because of discouragement or discontentment represent both a public and a personal tragedy. The sad thing is that much of this failure could be prevented.

There is meaning and sadness in this comment, made by a C.C.C. dropout: "College just ain't relevent to me and what I want to do." Educators must make college relevent. Educators must keep on reminding themselves that their mission is to help people succeed--not to contribute to their failure.

For all of those who leave college early--they probably leave with mental scars that will never be healed. The personal pain of "wastage" is poignantly presented in the following two letters:

> To whom it may concern:
>
> I saw your ad in the Saturday Review, but don't know if you'll take me because I've flunked out of two colleges three times. . .[9]

---

[8]Robert W. Pitcher and Babette Blaushild, Why College Students Fail, Funk and Wagnalls, New York: NY, 1970 p. 3.

[9]Ibid p. 3.

Gentlemen:

> Just flunked my second exam this semester in Sophomore English and now the handwriting is on the wall--my accume just can't take it. Can you take me soon? My parents will be pretty upset, and before they get my grades I'd like to tell them you'll take me on. Please answer right away.[10]

Education is essentially a human enterprise involving interpersonal interaction among students, teachers, administrators, and citizens. Education in a democratic society is responsible for seeing that each individual develops to the maximum of his potential regardless of how great or modest that potential may be. American education is based on the belief that mass education does not deny respect and care for the individual, that quantity and quality in education can coexist.

> For the individual, the door to the schoolhouse, to the library, and to the college lead to the richest treasures of our open society: to the power of knowledge; to the training and skill necessary for productive employment; to the wisdom, the ideas, and the culture which enrich life; and to the creative, self-disciplined understanding of society needed for good citizenship in today's changing and challenging world.[11]

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[10] Ibid p. 3.

[11] From President Kennedy's Education Message to Congress, January 1963. Sidney W. Tiedt, The Role of the Federal Government in Education, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 179.

Knowledge of causes for student dropouts could be vital data for management of the college and specifically the Department of Business. It is our hope that this study, in some small way, can not only help keep the schoolhouse doors open, but can make people want to stay inside the schoolhouse once they get there.

V. Definition of Terms

Certain terms were used in this study, which provide for specific clarity of discussion. Some terms, in common usage, often have several meanings. In an effort to circumvent vagueness, the definitions which follow are provided.

Control Group: The students who matriculate in Introduction to Business (460-108) and completed the course with a grade of A,B,C,D, or F.

Dropouts: A Cuyahoga Community College student who does not complete an academic course for which he has matriculated.

Experimental Group: The students who matriculate in Introduction to Business (460-108) and do not complete the course for whatever reason.

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[3]Donald E. Greive, A Follow-through Study of 1,642 Full-time Students Who Entered a Comprehensive Community College in the Fall of 1968, an unpublished doctoral thesis.

Full-time Equivalent (F.T.E.): Is a student taking 15 quarter hours of academic work. For a campus or academic department, the F.T.E. is calculated by dividing 15 into the total credit hours of enrollment for that campus or department.

Introduction to Business (460-108): This course is the first course in the business sequence and is a pre-requisite to all of the business principles, problems, and procedures. It is a three-lecture hour course.

Population: Consists of all the students who matriculate in Introduction to Business (460-108) at Cuyahoga Community College - Metro Campus during the winter term of 1974.

VI. Limitations of the Study

(1) No provision was made to hold constant the variable of instructors; thus, the teaching styles and behavior of various instructors might be a contribution to drop-outs.

(2) No provision was made to control or analyze the data according to sex, age, high school background, military service, or number of hours spent working either full-time or part-time, on a job, outside of class.

(3) There were no provisions made to include or exclude motivation as a variable.

(4) No provision was made to analyze of segment day (full-time) students from night (part-time) students.

(5) No provision was made to control the socioeconomic background of the subjects of this study. The Metropoliton Campus of Cuyahoga Community College draws its student population from a diverse range of middle and lower class families.

VII. Basic Assumptions

A number of factors of the present study represent the adoption of specific assumptions.

(1) All instructors were using the same textbook for Introduction to Business (460-108).
(2) All instructors required the same level of mastery for students in Introduction to Business (460-108).
(3) All instructors were competent.
(4) The students in Introduction to Business (460-108) were a cross section of Metro students.

VIII. Procedures for Collecting Data

(1) Using departmental records, the 14-day enrollment for the ten sections of Introduction to Business (460-108), winter term 1974, was assembled.
(2) Using final sheets for the ten sections of Introduction to Business (460-108), winter term 1974, the day's out-rate was calculated.
(3) Each drop-out student was telephoned and asked to state the specific reason for his or her drop-out.
(4) The drop-out reasons were coded as college caused or non-college caused.
(5) A statistical analysis was used to determine whether or not there were significant differences between college caused drop-outs and non-college caused drop-outs.

IX. Statistical Analysis

It was hypothesized that there would be no difference between the students who dropped (460-108) for personal reasons and those who dropped for school caused reasons.

Ho: #1 = #2
Alternative hypothesis
Ha #1 ≠ #2
The level of significance
: 0.05

The critical z value for a two-tailed test is 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. In this study the z value was 5.97, therefore we can reject the hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

X. Summary

The present study of why students drop (or withdraw) from Introduction to Business (460-108) would indicate that the predominate reasons are not related to the college. Of the students who were contacted, the following results were found:

Dropped on a non-college basis

32 - dropped because of family or work problems
4 - dropped for health reasons
2 - dropped for miscellaneous reasons

All four of the college related drops were due to teacher-student conflicts.

Of the 51 students we were unable to contact, the most frequent problem (37 cases) was a disconnected telephone. This speaks to the high mobility of our student population. It is only reasonable to caution that our sample may not be valid. It was our hope to sample the total population of withdrawal students. Since our survey was limited to 52 of 103, it may be that our sample is not representative. (see Table 2)

Table 2

Summary of enrollments, withdrawals, phone contacts, and reasons for withdrawals in Introduction to Business (460-108), Winter Quarter, 1974.

Section	Enrollment	Withdrawals	No. of Phone Contacts	College Related	Non-College Related
2001	40	7	5	1	4
2002	34	9	4	0	4
2003	51	9	8	1	7
2004	34	15	3	0	3
2005	62	11	5	0	5
2006	21	2	1	1	0
2061*	59	19	10	1	9
2062*	43	13	7	0	7
2063*	37	4	3	0	3
2064*	41	14	6	0	6
Totals	422	103	52	4	48

*Evening sections

XI. Recommendations

Incidental to the study the authors discovered that the students surveyed were seldom aware of the options open to them. Rarely did they realize that rather than withdrawal, they might have considered changing sections. Although various teachers proceed at a different pace and pattern, it is possible and reasonable for students to change sections and complete the course. Based on this, it is recommended that:

1) The Coordinator of Business Programs meet with the Admissions and Records staff and the Counseling staff to discuss how to counsel students to consider section change as an alternative to withdrawal.
2) The Coordinator of Business Programs hold a conference with the teachers of Introduction to Business (460-108) to search for reasonable alternatives for students who encounter shift change, job change, health and family problems. It is clearly unacceptable to continue the current volume of "wastage." Since the student population is "non-traditional," a lock-step traditional approach doesn't work. Therefore, it is hoped that a teacher meeting would generate several usable alternatives for dealing with "wastage."

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